

From: [Ron Baldwin](#)
To: [Delta Plan Comments@Deltacouncil](#)
Cc: [Macaulay, Terry@DeltaCouncil](#); [Grindstaff, Joe@DeltaCouncil](#); [Alvarez, Eric@DeltaCouncil](#)
Subject: Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Emergency Response
Date: Thursday, February 17, 2011 12:23:30 PM
Attachments: [DeltaResponseVision.doc](#)
[ATT00001.txt](#)

Sirs, I have previously submitted a comment on the portion of the Delta Plan draft addressing emergency response in the Delta. I think that the process is struggling to deal with detailed and extensive information on the current state and future needs for flood fight and the other emergency response functions. Detailed information is being summarized into general and not always accurate statements of the "problem". There is no attempt to show a comprehensive vision for the way forward. I do not believe the State agencies can articulate a clear strategic vision of the way forward because large bureaucracies tend to want to justify the current system, or just tinker with it, more than imagine fundamental change. What I generally see in the State proposals, CVFPP process, the Delta Vision report, and other current processes addressing emergency response is just tinkering with the current system (Let's paint water marks on light polls, etc. etc.). No attempt to understand how response actually works and how we should make fundamental changes in how it works for Delta floods given the immense potential for a Delta flood to have statewide impacts. I have stated previously in documents submitted to the DSC that one has to distinguish between the flood fight operation, attempts to prevent or contain the flood, and the other emergency functions such as evacuation and rescue. Different players, different issues, and different barriers to making fundamental beneficial changes to how they are managed. Flood fight operations must take a special place in our work since preventing a levee from failing, or effectively containing a flood, prevents the tragedy while good evacuation, rescue, or shelter operations only ameliorate the tragedy. In an attempt to give the DSC a sense of how you could develop a bolder vision for improving emergency response, I am submitting a two page "Bold Vision for Future Delta Flood Fight Response". Note that it only addresses levee flood fight operations as a start to strategic thinking. Examples of the flood contingency maps and related documents that it references can be seen at www.sjmap.org/oesmg. Making fundamental changes to how we have done things for many years is more difficult than tinkering with the current system but it potentially has a greater payoff. Specific actions, such as placing flood fight stockpiles, would then be related to a bolder, clear, strategic vision of a fundamentally different and more effective system for using them. While the forthcoming SB27 report is not based on this "vision" per se it will hopefully reflect many of its elements. The attached document is my own and any criticism or counter-argument (or contumely) should attach only to me. While we can argue the details I believe after almost 30 years of experience that it is basically correct. Ron Baldwin Director of Emergency Operations for San Joaquin County

The Major Problems with Levee Flood Fight Response

Problem #1: While we may “liaise” or “coordinate” we respond essentially as independent agencies; reclamation districts, cities, counties, and DWR under our own budgets and processes. Our reaction is governed in large part by our own internal budget problems. We respond as much to our own internal command structure as to any common multi-jurisdictional understanding of the situation at the scene. We struggle with our own internal policy issues. We process our own FEMA claims and struggle with regulations and eligibility issues independently of each other. We end up competing to buy the same materials, we operate independent logistical systems, and take too long to make mutual critical decisions, decide who is going to do what, and get to the point of action.

Problem #2: A good response system empowers and encourages the lowest level of command that can deal with a problem to deal with it. Our current system (RDs, local government, DWR, and other State agencies) disempowers the lowest level of government “command” and forces decisions for relatively modest levee problems to higher levels of command or levels of government where either decision making authority and/or funding is available. The lowest level of command is the people on the scene; the reclamation district officials and their engineers along with the County, DWR, and Federal officials in the field. The people on the scene have the best information, get it more quickly, can assess the situation more quickly, and can act more quickly due to their proximity to the problem. However, for problems that go beyond sandbags, we have an upside down funding system where the RDs quickly throw up their hands due to lack of funds and local representatives of those agencies that may have the funds have to go through internal hierarchies to get permission to act. Response is delayed due to the need to transfer information to these higher levels of command, e.g. the F.O.C., which are subsequently overwhelmed in a major flood with problems that RDs and their local engineers could handle themselves if funding were available.

Problem #3: We have not been taking the opportunity before the flood to collect critical missing information, pre-plan interagency flood fights, determine response options to foreseeable levee failure scenarios, and make agency pre-assignments so agency personnel can do detailed pre-planning. We go into floods in an ad hoc manner. We work out coordination of logistics and communications on the fly. We figure out what should be done if a levee fails at the time under horrible time constraints, the worst political pressure, and lacking key information to make rapid and effective decisions. We act as if floods are mysteries that can only be understood when they arrive. We won't make commitments to a pre-assigned role in responding to a levee failure because we haven't 1) done the pre-planning that could be done to specifically identify these needed actions, and 2) are afraid that such effective pre-planning would “commit us” and have a budgetary implication that we want to ignore until we can't, when the flood arrives.

The Bold Vision for Future Delta Flood Fight Response

1. Complete the Flood Contingency Maps and related Preliminary Engineering Designs for the entire Delta.
2. All levels of government officially approve the maps and agree to agency/jurisdiction pre-assignments for general flood fight support missions and for implementing elements of identified response options to foreseeable levee failure scenarios.
3. Establish local unified flood fight commands and the Delta multi-agency coordination group as legal entities through legislation or agreement that would give these unified commands legal authority and jurisdiction to respond to levees. Disaster claims can be processed through the unified command and not through each agency's budget and separate bureaucracies. This could be coordinated with FEMA to ensure this new entity meets regulatory requirements for response. All jurisdictions would supply the personnel to staff these commands. DWR, RDs, and/or County would provide unified commanders.
4. Establish a Levee Emergency Response Fund that will empower local unified commands to act on levee problems at their level. This fund would be outside of agency budgets and thereby avoid internal budget quandaries. The fund would be initially established with Delta bond funds (probably less than 3% of the bonds). The fund would be maintained by putting FEMA disaster reimbursement from major disasters back in the fund. Shortages would be made up through a "5-year contribution plan" by all levels of government. Appropriate rules, etc. would be created.
5. Establish a Delta regional flood response authority independent of any one agency (through the Delta Protection Commission or independent JPA?) that would maintain regional plans, oversee administration of the Emergency Fund, and support the regional response systems (e.g. Delta MACS, the unified flood fight commands) when activated.